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## WISCONSIN LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL AMENDMENT MEMO

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<b>2003 Assembly Bill 623</b>	<b>Assembly Amendment 2</b>
<i>Memo published:</i> March 24, 2004 <i>Contact:</i> Mark C. Patronskey, Senior Staff Attorney (266-9280)	

Current administrative rules in s. NR 20.40, Wis. Adm. Code, provide regulations for fishing tournaments. **Assembly Bill 623** expands authority of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to promulgate rules for fishing tournaments, and specifies a variety of regulations that the rules must contain. One of the constraints in the bill is that DNR may not allow a participant in a fishing tournament to engage in any activity that would not be permissible if engaged in by another angler who is not participating in the tournament.

Current law requires an angler to count against the daily bag limit any fish taken into possession. A fish must be released immediately if it is not to count against the daily bag limit. Both the current regulations applicable to fishing tournaments and Assembly Bill 623 prohibit the practice known as “culling,” in which a tournament participant or other angler who keeps fish until the daily bag limit is reached, and then releases a fish in order to replace it with another. The reason for the prohibition against culling is concerns regarding fish mortality.

**Assembly Amendment 2** requires DNR to establish a pilot program for bass fishing tournaments in which the DNR must issue four permits per year for the next three fishing seasons. These permits will permit those who participate in the tournaments to cull bass. One of the tournaments must allow culling both largemouth and smallmouth bass, and the remaining three must allow culling of only largemouth bass. The amendment requires that each boat in the tournament must be equipped with a live well, the total number of fish held in the live well may not exceed the daily bag limit, and a bass must be capable of swimming away in a healthy condition when released. DNR is directed to cooperate with the Bass Federation to conduct research and collect data in order to evaluate the pilot program, and to report its findings to the Legislature. The pilot program does not apply after December 31, 2006.

**Legislative History**

Assembly Amendment 2 was recommended for adoption by the Assembly Committee on Natural Resources on March 2, 2004, on a vote of Ayes, 9; Noes, 2. Assembly Bill 623 was recommended for passage, as amended, by the Committee on Natural Resources on March 2, 2004, on a vote of Ayes, 10; Noes, 1. On March 10, 2004, the Assembly adopted Assembly Amendment 2 and passed Assembly Bill 623, as amended, on separate voice votes.

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